



Bi-Weekly Press Briefing 12 July 2022

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Story

PRESS BRIEFING BY THE UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION SERVICE

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World Meteorological Organisation Announcements

Clare Nullis, for the World Meteorological Organization, explained that a new heatwave was building up in Western Europe, currently affecting mainly Spain and Portugal, which was forecast to intensify and spread. Spain was currently seeing temperatures well into the 40°Cs, while the UK had issued an amber warning for extreme heat. There was a high probability the heat wave would expand to North and East Europe and reach Western Central Europe and the Northern Balkans by the end of next week. The heat would possibly spread to other parts of Europe in the following weeks. Droughts, as seen in Italy and the northern Balkan Peninsula, were also to be expected to carry on and expand in Western and Western Central Europe within the next two weeks. It was not only Europe which was impacted but also Iran and Pakistan as parts of Asia had also been seeing intense heat. In Kyrgyzstan, a glacier collapsed as the temperature had been unusually high.

Ms. Nullis additionally stated that the World Meteorological Organization was to issue a regional report: the

“State of the Climate in Latin America and the Caribbean report”, on Friday 22 July, at 3pm Geneva time. This would give information on climate-, weather- and water-related impacts in Latin America and the Caribbean, focusing on how to strengthen multi-hazard early warning systems. The report was to be released at a meeting in Colombia and would be translated in all official languages.

In response to a question, Ms. Nullis said that the World Meteorological Organisation was coordinating a programme called Global Cryosphere Watch, whose members were monitoring what was happening to glaciers. The monitoring of glaciers, including their possible collapse, was, however, the responsibility of national meteorological services. The Organisation was also spearheading a Water and Climate Coalition and its Secretary-General, Prof Petteri Taalas, along with other coalition leaders, was currently in UN Headquarters at the UNGA High Level Political Forum, calling for a more concerted action on water and climate, including the need to do more to protect glaciers. There was currently no internationally coordinated system for naming heatwaves, she specified, highlighting that it was needed to name tropical cyclones, or some winter storms, as they were quite big systems that affected multiple countries – while heat waves were more localized.

Ms. Nullis also said that droughts were accompanied by the risk of wildfire and that maps were showing elevated risks in Spain and Southern France. As the drought conditions continued, the risk of fires was to increase. On the health aspect of the heat wave, she mentioned the need to stay cool, stay hydrated, and avoid exercising in the heat of the day, among other things. At night time when temperature didn't fall under 20 degrees, vulnerable groups, such as elderly people, were more at risk.

Food insecurity in Africa

Patrick Youssef, for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), said that an estimated 346 million people in Africa were facing severe food insecurity, which meant that a quarter of the continent's population did not have enough to eat. 9.6 million people in Sudan and 6.8 million in South Sudan were highly food insecure, and acute food insecurity in Somalia had worsened since the beginning of 2022, with an estimated 4.8 million people facing a food crisis, for instance. The Sahel region was being hit by the worst drought in over a decade, pushing more than 10.5 million people into malnutrition. Children were disproportionately affected by the worsening food crisis.

Mr. Youssef added that conflicts remained the main drivers of food insecurity, as they often caused displacements, loss of livelihoods and prevented farmers from planting crops. Cereal prices in Africa surged because of the slump in exports from Ukraine, sharpening the impact of conflict and climate change and sparking fears of social unrest. Russia and Ukraine together constituted 25% of the world production of wheat and grains while around 85% of Africa's wheat supplies were imported. Somalia, for example, got more than 90% of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine. Weather extremes were also important drivers of food insecurity in African countries.

Food insecurity was a complex challenge, but there were meaningful steps that could be taken. The ICRC had three main calls to action for public authorities. First, in conflict, parties to the fighting had the primary responsibility to ensure the basic needs of civilians in areas under their control were met. Second, funding to address the food crisis needed to be increased immediately to save lives. However, longer-term action to manage risks and strengthen resilience was also critical to prepare for the next crisis. Third, it was urgent to meet the scale of needs in the short-, medium- and long-term to leverage the capacities of all actors, including humanitarian and development agencies, financial institutions, and local and regional authorities. Worryingly, there was an overall decline in funding to cover the Committee's global budget when important areas of its work around the globe were currently severely underfunded, threatening its ability to help those suffering the effects of conflict and violence, including food assistance programs.

In response to a question, Mr. Youssef explained that the International Committee of the Red Cross was not trying to get out of its usual mandate to alleviate suffering, but was rather trying to implement systems to protect people against suffering, particularly people in conflict situations. In protracted crisis situations,

providing a bag of rice for a duration of thirty years had its limits, and the Committee had decided, for example, to provide seed tools and fertilizers instead. As the Committee was trying to build the resilience of people and communities, it had to look at not only bridging over humanitarian to development but also at involving various types of actors to be part of the reflection around meaningful solutions.

Updates on Haiti

Jean-Martin Bauer, for [the World Food Programme](#), stated that Haiti needed attention right now as the situation needed to be understood for what it was: a serious food crisis that was getting worse. Almost half the population of Haiti was already facing hunger; and rising inflation, high costs of food and fuel, as well as a deteriorating security situation were pushing Haitians over the edge. The insecurity in and around Port-au-Prince had been drastically worsening since early May, severely affecting the livelihoods of Haitians across the country, leading to increased hunger levels and a serious protection crisis. Around 1.1 million people in Port-au-Prince (for an overall population of 2.3 million) were already food insecure before the crisis intensified.

Mr. Bauer added that insecurity also affected the rest of the country where organized crime groups expanded control over the main roads to Port-au-Prince, isolating the capital, holding back 3.8 million people living in the South from accessing markets, basic services and essential humanitarian assistance. It also impacted humanitarian operations as the volatile security situation was putting at risk critical humanitarian operations that many vulnerable Haitians relied on. The World Food Programme was providing a critical lifeline from the capital to the North, to the earthquake-affected South of the country and the humanitarian community through sea and air services for transporting passengers and cargo. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) helicopter remained the only safe option for humanitarian passengers to move in and out of the capital and across the country but was facing critical funding shortfalls that put humanitarian operations across the country at risk.

Hunger was expected to deepen in the coming months as the war in Ukraine continued to impact global supplies. This was because Haiti imported 70 percent of its cereals, making it vulnerable to the soaring global commodity prices. Inflation had risen by almost 27%, the food basket price had increased by 52% within a year.

The Programme was facing a funding shortfall and was in need of 39 million dollars over the next six months for his operations in Haiti.

In answer to a question, Mr. Bauer said that more attention needed to be paid to the situation in Haiti, as 4.5 million people were acutely food insecure, which was almost half the population. The Ukraine crisis had complicated advocacy, as it had some impacts on the allocation of resources within the humanitarian sectors. Mr. Bauer was also concerned that the situation was spiralling out of control already, as a large proportion of Port-au-Prince was controlled by gangs. The situation was getting worse by the day, and there was a need to scale up and to act now. It was difficult to gather data on malnutrition, but local figures were reporting 1 out of 5 children of "Cite soleil" to be acutely malnourished, which could be an indication of worsening in the country. The violence and the degradation of the economic situation were additional push factors worsening migration, as the loss of hope and opportunity were contributing to more migrations out of the country.

World Health Organization

Tarik Jasarevic, for the [World Health Organisation](#), announced that the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization would issue a "Report on the Gender Pay Gap in the Health Care Sector" during a launch event tomorrow in New York City at 6 pm. A press release would be sent today under embargo.

Other announcements

Ms. Alessandra Vellucci, Director of the United Nations Information Service (UNIS) in Geneva, announced that a press conference would be held on Thursday 14 July to present the new United Nations Conference on Trade and Development report “Rethinking the Foundation of Export Diversification in Africa: The Catalytic Role of Business and Financial Services”. The embargoed press conference on 14 July would be held at 11 a.m. and would feature Rebeca Grynspan, UNCTAD’s Secretary General, and Paul Akiwumi, its Director of Division for Africa, LDCs and Special Programmes. The embargo would be lifted at noon the same day.